

African love grass

Eragrostis curvula

Family Asteraceae

Identification

- Vigorous, clump-forming, perennial grass up to 1.5 m tall.
- Densely tufted with narrow leaves (harsh to touch) and usually curly at the tips.
- Leaves bright green to blue-green (leaves turn bronze-red after a hard frost).
- Leaf margins rolled inwards, usually hairless.
- Flower heads (panicles) are pyrimid-shaped with small, white flowers.
- Has fibrous roots, up to 50 cm deep.
- Blackish, oval-purple seeds attached to arching stems over 1 m long in summer.



African love grass Photo: T. Broughton (ECan)



A clump of African love grass Photo: B. Keenan (ECan) African love grass seed heads Photo: B. Keenan (ECan)

Where is it found?

African love grass grows in a wide range of habitats from sea-level up to 3500 m. It can tolerate fire, drought and frost conditions as well as poor soils. It does not grow very well in wet soils. It can be found growing on steep dry sites, short and tall tussockland, coastal areas, riverbeds, islands, cliffs and wastelands. African love grass has been found in South Canterbury and in Christchurch.

Why is it a problem?

African love grass is long-lived, fast growing and produces masses of widely dispersed seeds. It has the ability to quickly form dense stands in open country, displacing other native grasses and plants. It can invade bare areas, wasteland and disturbed places with the potential to grow throughout New Zealand. Seed is spread via wind, vehicles, animals and on people.

Status

African love grass is listed on the National Plant Pest Accord and is a 'Total Control' plant in Canterbury's Regional Pest Management Strategy 2005-2015. The objective is complete eradication from Canterbury. Please report any suspected sightings of African love grass to Environment Canterbury biosecurity staff on the Potential Pest Hotline (03) 363 9380.

Control

Environment Canterbury staff will carry out all control work for African love grass at Environment Canterbury's cost.



African love grass infestation Photo: T. Broughton (ECan)